



March 9, 2012

The Honorable Raymond H. LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: City of Seattle's Mercer West TIGER IV application

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I am pleased to write in support of the City of Seattle's application for the U.S. Department of Transportation TIGER grant for the Two-Way Mercer West project.

The Mercer Corridor is a critical transportation connection that carries more than 70,000 people a day. For decades, it has been a major traffic bottleneck in the Seattle area, limiting access to the growing South Lake Union area, the Seattle waterfront, the Seattle Center, and major federal and state highways.

Work is well underway on the Mercer East component of the corridor improvement project, and a TIGER grant would close the remaining gap in funding and allow work to proceed on Mercer West. This project has significant implications for jobs in our region in both the near term as well as for Seattle's long-term future, and supports four key sectors of the regional economy including information technology, biotechnology, travel and tourism, and international trade.

Construction is expected to generate 500 direct jobs, and once complete, Mercer West will carry 55,000 vehicles daily, serving area employers such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the University of Washington, PATH, Amazon, RealNetworks, Classmates.com, F5 Networks, the North Pacific Fishing Fleet and the maritime and manufacturing industries of Interbay and Ballard. The project also improves freight mobility and enhances access for the passenger cruise ship industry, which has an economic impact of \$393 million.

Successful completion of Mercer West will have benefits for the neighborhoods it serves directly as well. For example, the Seattle Center Master Plan calls for mixed-use redevelopment of the two-block Mercer Garage property and enhanced pedestrian connections to the surrounding neighborhood. Mercer West is key to these and other Seattle Center improvements. Also, as part of its work for future development, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has begun excavation for the widening of Mercer Street and the undergrounding of transmission lines that serve the entire South Lake Union neighborhood.

Completing Mercer West is also integral to the success of other major transportation projects, especially the SR 99 tunnel, which will replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Mercer West will link Seattle Center, the Port of Seattle, and neighborhoods in northwest Seattle with the new tunnel. Planning around the downtown tunnel has proceeded with the assumption that Mercer West would move forward. With federal funding, work can proceed and we can make the most of the investments we've already made.

Completing Mercer West has been a priority for the city, the state and the region, and with federal funding, we have the opportunity to improve mobility and access in one of our region's economic engines. I encourage your support of the city's application for TIGER funds for this crucial project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles D. Knutson", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Charles Knutson
Senior Vice President, Operations and Policy Development

cc: Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Governor Christine Gregoire
Congressman Jim McDermott
Mayor Mike McGinn, Seattle